

News Release

Physics Made Fun at Video GameDesign Camp 2007

By David DeMuth, Krista Lemos, Stephanie Onken on Friday, July 13, 2007

Rocket launching is both art and science – there's the creation of the model rocket, the details for a successful launch and the legalities to following from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regarding air space.

That's the lesson learned by 31 GameDesign teenagers from the University of Minnesota, Crookston, who took part in a rocket launching demonstration as part of their weeklong camp experience this summer.

The rocket showcase, along with the exploration of force-feedback joysticks, eyeToys and a research grade motion-capture rig, were all part of the adventure of learning about the math, physics and sociology associated video games and their creation.

Junior Michelle Wang, Maple Grove, Minn., participated in the camp as a way to confirm her educational interests. "I like games so I wanted to find out about making them," Michelle said. "It could end up possibly being a career choice."

It is among the goals of the camp to educate students on a thriving gaming industry, according to Associate Professor David DeMuth, Ph.D., who along with Peter Border, Ph.D., have orchestrated the camp; both physicist by day, gaming enthusiast by night.



Students who took part in the GameDesign Camp.

High school students from around the country, including Ohio, New York and Illinois, received hands-on training in commercial game editors and participated in tournaments as well as numerous LAN (land area network) parties, where they aggressively competed, evidencing a unique and underappreciated problem solving and communication skill-set. Campers also learned about how to recreate the natural world through software, the fundamentals of building game levels and how to develop simple games.

Senior Jason Lukntz, Chicago, Ill., said he and his friends surfed online for a video game camps, and the one at the U of M, Crookston was the only one they found. So they signed up and took a minivan west.

Campers across the board, including Jason and Michelle, said they were excited about the week and that the software programs they learned and used were all downloadable free via the Internet.

In its second year, the camp is designed to help students build a better understanding of a technical world which feeds heavily off the simulation of real life. Its success is the result of a collaboration sparked between DeMuth and Border in 2005 after the launch of a successful game design course as a part of a new software engineering program at the U of M, Crookston. An expanded 10-day camp is under consideration for next year.

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